In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

WE CLAIM:

1. 1. (currently amended) A network switch for resolving requests from a plurality of host

2 initiators by scheduling access to a plurality of disk storage devices, the network switch

3 comprising:

4 (a) a switched fabric comprising a plurality of switching elements, each switching

5 element comprising:

6 a plurality of bi-directional switched fabric ports; and

7 a control input connected to receive switch control data for selectively

8 configuring the switching element in order to interconnect the bi-directional

9 switched fabric ports;

10 (b) a memory for storing a routing and scheduling program; and

11 (c) a microprocessor, responsive to the requests, for executing the steps of the routing

12 and scheduling program to generate the switch control data to transmit scheduled

13 requests through the bi-directional switched fabric ports,

14 wherein:

15 at least one of the plurality of switching elements comprises a disk storage interface

16 for connecting to a selected one of the disk storage devices;

17 the microprocessor for scheduling access to the plurality of disk storage devices

18 through the disk storage interface;

19 the disk storage interface for receiving scheduling data from the selected one of the

20 disk storage devices;

21 the memory for receiving the scheduling data via the bi-directional switched fabric

22 ports of a selected number of the switching elements; and

23   the scheduling data is processed according to a priority such that the selected

24   switching elements transfer the scheduling data through the bi-directional

25   switched fabric ports before transferring data associated with the scheduled

26   requests.

1   2.   (previously presented) The network switch as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one

2   switching element further comprises a disk storage device connected to the disk storage

3   interface.

1   3.   (previously presented) The network switch as recited in claim 1, wherein:

2   (a) each disk storage device comprises a disk and a head; and

3   (b) the scheduling data comprises a radial location of the head relative to the disk within

4   each disk storage device.

1   4.   (previously presented) The network switch as recited in claim 3, wherein the scheduling

2   data further comprises a circumferential location of the head relative to the disk within

3   each disk drive.

1   5.   (previously presented) The network switch as recited in claim 1, wherein the switching

2   elements further comprise a plurality of virtual lanes, wherein:

3   (a) at least one of the virtual lanes is reserved for transferring data associated with the

4   scheduled requests;

5   (b) at least one of the virtual lanes is reserved for transferring the scheduling data; and

6   (c) the virtual lane for transferring the scheduling data comprises a higher priority than

7   the virtual lane for transferring the data associated with the scheduled requests.

1 6. (previously presented) The network switch as recited in claim 1, wherein the scheduling

2 data is communicated to the memory through the bi-directional switched fabric ports

3 according to an isochronous protocol.

1 7. (previously presented) A method of resolving requests from a plurality of host initiators

2 by scheduling access to a plurality of disk storage devices connected to a network switch,

3 the network switch comprising a switched fabric comprising a plurality of switching

4 elements, the method comprising the steps of:

5 (a) transmitting through the switching elements scheduling data from the plurality of disk

6 storage devices to a memory;

7 (b) evaluating the scheduling data in order to schedule the requests from the host

8 initiators; and

9 (c) transmitting data associated with the scheduled requests through the switching

10 elements to the plurality of disk storage devices,

11 wherein the scheduling data is processed according to a priority such that the

12 switching elements transfer the scheduling data before transferring data associated

13 with the scheduled requests.

1 8. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein:

2 (a) each disk storage device comprises a disk and a head; and

3 (b) the scheduling data comprises a radial location of the head relative to the disk within

4 each disk storage device.

1 9. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 8, wherein the scheduling data

2 further comprises a circumferential location of the head relative to the disk within each

3 disk drive.

1 10. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the switching elements

2   further comprise a plurality of virtual lanes, wherein:

3   (a) at least one of the virtual lanes is reserved for transferring data associated with the

4   scheduled requests;

5   (b) at least one of the virtual lanes is reserved for transferring the scheduling data; and

6   (c) the virtual lane for transferring the scheduling data comprises a higher priority than

7   the virtual lane for transferring the data associated with the scheduled requests.

1 11. (previously presented) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the scheduling data is

2   communicated to the memory through the switching elements according to an

3   isochronous protocol.